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Continued from page 316.

and his talent found here so noble a foster-mother, that he may well be considered her adopted son. In another sense, Handel may be claimed as thoroughly English; inasmuch as it was not until after his diligent study of Purcell, Croft, and other English Cathedral writers, that he produced those immortal oratorios, on which his fame chiefly rests. From the period of his arrival, his career was marked by a series of triumphs. He began by a triumph—a signal triumph; for he triumphed over a stout prejudice, which the new King of England had conceived against him, on account of his having failed to return to Hanover, when he himself was elector there,—a kind of surly compliment in itself, by-the-bye. It seems that Baron Kilmansegge, a good friend of the composer's, and a courtier high in royal favor, contrived the expedient; which was this. He arranged a party on the Thames, at which the King was present; and having requested Handel to prepare music for the occasion, his "Water music" was performed on board an attendant barge. His majesty, struck with its beauty, enquired the name of the composer; and upon hearing it, not only graciously pardoned the old offence, but doubled the pension of which Handel had been in receipt.

Before founding the establishment projected by the nobility, called "The Royal Academy of Music," Bononcini and Attilio were invited over, as worthy rivals to test the strength of Handel, in his claim to sway the musical sceptre. The ordeal appointed, was the composition of an opera in three acts, *Muzio Scævola*, each act to be set by one of the competitors. To Handel, who composed the third act, was at once adjudged the victory; and he continued to fulfil his engagement with the subscribers until 1726. Handel's society was sought as an honor by people of the highest rank, the Duke of Chandos, and the Earl of Burlington, making him their guest for long periods together. At Burlington-house, during his three years' residence there, his time passed delightfully; his mornings being devoted to study, his evenings in converse with some of the first wits and men of letters of the day. Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and others, often met there, at dinner; and frequently, his afternoons were spent at St. Paul's Cathedral, where Greene, (though then neither Dr. Greene, nor organist) was proud to receive him, and do the honors of the organ, of which Handel was so fond.

Anecdotes are related of Handel's dominant love of his art, which towered above all ordinary considerations of ceremony or interest. One, when at a rehearsal, a lady-singer proving somewhat refractory, Handel startled her into submission by catching her up in his arms, and swearing, that if she persisted, he'd throw her out of the window. Another, when just previous to a performance, somebody chancing to look through the hole in the green-curtain of the stage, announced that "there was a wretched attendance, the house was quite empty;" Handel retorted "So much de bedder! De moosic will sound all de finer!"

Of his gastronomic powers, with his unmisgiving confidence in them, and his complacent sense of his competence altogether, there is an amusing incident related. Arriving at a certain hostelry, he ordered dinner for six; and after waiting until the appointed hour, no repast appearing, he rang for the waiter, and accosted him with "Vell! Why do you not

serve de dinner?" The reply meekly suggested that they were "only waiting for the company—the other five gentlemen who were expected." Upon which Handel thundered out:—"Bring up de dinner! I am de Gompany."

As Handel advanced in life, he devoted his attention almost exclusively to the composition of sacred music; and he produced, with marvellous fertility, his grand oratorios. Of the sublimest, the *Messiah*, we can so inadequately speak, in a sketch like the present, that we refer our readers to an account given at greater length upon the subject elsewhere in our pages.

The circumstance of Handel's setting some of Milton's words from the *Samson Agonistes*, after his calamity, has a doubly affecting impression, when we think of the glorious blind poet, and the glorious blind musician, each in their several high-privileged art, giving utterance to their soul's light within them. We can never listen to that sublime strain of combined harmony and poetry,—"*Total Eclipse*,"—with its profound yearnings of emotion, but we are stirred by feelings of reverential pity, breathless admiration, and deep, heart-stricken sympathy, towards the two great sightless Seers, hymning their own perceptions of a kindred woe, in the supposed plaint of Samson, midst his quenched vision: yet, withal, so divine a spirit pervading it, as to redeem the bitterness, and leave nothing but an influence of tender beauty. Glorious power of Art, which can shed radiance upon even so dark a human sorrow as blindness.

Handel's death occurred in 1759, at the age of seventy-four.

Our next sketch will contain several curious anecdotes in the life of Haydn.

M. GÉVAËRT.

M. Gévaert, a young Belgian artist, hardly yet four-and-twenty, has lately made his debut in Paris with signal success as a composer. The circumstances of his life contain some interesting particulars. He was born, of humble parents, in a little village a few leagues from Ghent; and for a time, like them, was only a simple labourer; but as he early evinced a dislike to the occupation, they endeavoured to find some other pursuit for him. Struck with the music he had heard each Sunday at Church, he burned to discover by what signs these sounds were expressed; and sitting down upon the ground, traced out for himself, in the sand, figures which should form a system of musical language—intelligible at least to him. He chanced to obtain from the Sacristan a vocal score; and although the notes were at first mere hieroglyphics to him—differing as greatly from his own, as Hindostanee from French—yet soon, such was his ardour, that he mastered the notation of the score. Without assistance, he taught himself to sol-fa; and an old book of thorough-bass, that he found at the schoolmaster's, initiated him into the principles of harmony. His first composition was an air with variations, which he played on the organ one Easter Sunday, to the wondering admiration of the villagers. He composed, still without any help from a master, a Mass for 3 voices, several Motetts, a Trio for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello, and other works, which soon spread his fame among the neighbouring villages. Nothing was talked of but the musical labourer; and his parents were urged to send him to some Conservatoire. But they entertained a horror of the very name of musician, which they associated with that of strolling fiddler. At length, won by the dazzling predictions of an old village

musician, M. Gévaert's father placed his son with a distinguished artist, Mengal, who belonged to the Conservatoire at Ghent. He had not been there long, when he gained the prize for harmony; in the following year, that for counterpoint; and in 1847, the Conservatoire at Brussels awarded him the prize which entitled him to visit Rome. His family, dreading the dangers of a voyage to Italy, pleaded for a delay of two years. During this interval, an Opera of his in three acts (Hughes de Zonnerghem) was performed at the Ghent theatre; and shortly after, a comic Opera in one act, called "*La Comedie à la ville*." In 1849, the period of his delay being expired, he went to Paris; and having stayed there some months, visited Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, at the expense of the Belgian government. He returned to Ghent in 1852; and having spent some time with his parents, last winter returned to Paris, where he was warmly received by his friends, who introduced him to M. Perrin and M. Seveste. A countryman of M. Gévaert's, the distinguished librettiste, Gustave Vaëza, wrote a comic opera for him to set, "*Georgette*," the piece which has recently been produced with such marked success at the Théâtre Lyrique.

ENGLISH OPERA AT DRURY-LANE.

(Abridged from the "*The Musical World*.")

WE have, within the last fortnight, received numerous letters, soliciting further information on this all-absorbing topic. Will there be, or will there not be, an English Opera at Drury-Lane? is the universal cry. To this question, at present, we are unable to return a satisfactory response. Matters are not yet definitely arranged between Mr. Smith and Mr. Case. There is still a difference. As the affair has been explained to us, we understand it as follows:—Some months since, Mr. Case took the theatre from Mr. Smith, for the production of English Operas four times a week, to commence about the middle of February, with the understanding that Mr. Case should, up to the 20th of January, have the option of retaining the two off-nights, by paying half the terms of the regular nights, if only used for rehearsals, or adding them to the regular nights of performance, on the same terms. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Smith thought he had found an Edmund Kean, or a Macready, in Gustavus Vasa Brooke: anxious to attain, quickly as possible, the fortune which that prodigious actor would inevitably bring him, he was desirous of securing his assistance for those two nights, about which Mr. Case had not decided, or was not called upon to decide. Mr. Smith wrote to Mr. Case requesting to be informed what four nights he would select for his operas, that he might arrange with the great Gustavus, about the other two. Mr. Case answered he was not bound to name any nights whatever; whereupon Mr. Smith retorted, he should fix his two nights; upon which Mr. Case replied, he would abide by his bond; to which Mr. Smith returned, that his solicitor lived in Bond-street, or something to that effect; whereby, to make use of a nautical phrase, "all good fellowship went by the board." If this statement be true, Mr. Smith is both logically and ethically wrong. There may be some flaw in the agreement, or some quibble in the wording, and Mr. Smith may, having possession, hold his theatre; but certainly, to common appreciation, Mr. Case would seem to have the best of the case. True, we have not heard Mr. Smith's account of the transaction, and are bound to pause before pronouncing our decided opinion one way or the other; nevertheless, as the explanation did not come to us from any partizan of Mr. Case, we confess to placing some reliance on what we have just stated. If our statement be correct, we repeat, Mr. Smith is both logically and ethically wrong.

But, notwithstanding all our information, we hope that an arrangement will be entered into between Messrs. Smith

and Case. It would be well for all parties it should be so—well for Mr. Smith, well for Mr. Case, well for the British artists generally, well for Drury-Lane, and excellent well for the public; who, we believe, in the establishment of an English Opera at Drury-Lane, with such materials as Mr. Case has provided, would enjoy a rare and admirable entertainment.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Colored Envelopes are sent to all Subscribers whose payment in advance is exhausted. The paper will be discontinued where the Subscriber neglects to renew. We again remind those who are disappointed in getting back numbers, that only the music pages are stereotyped, and of the rest of the paper, only sufficient are printed to supply the current sale.

Alpha, Methwold.—Say how a set of rules could reach you, for the society you propose forming.

C. L. W., London, may apply to Mr. Pitman, No. 1, New Ormond-street.

G., with thanks, is informed that the musical pieces we insert are confined to those of established popularity, or to those by composers of acknowledged repute. Experiments cannot be hazarded.

J. D. H., Hull.—The demise alluded to in your letter, was recorded at page 304.

W., Norwich, is thanked for his kind letter. The series of musical articles he enquires after, will be resumed at an early period.

A Mozartean.—The matter he refers to, is less within our control than we could wish; nevertheless, we are not without hope.

A Canterbury Subscriber.—It is not legal to print the words of copyright songs, ballads, &c., for the use of audiences, without the proprietor's written permission; but this, in most cases, would be readily obtained.

Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

MOZART AND THE CRITICS OF HIS DAY.—It is a curious fact, that the majority of the musical critics from 1762 to 1793, never mention Mozart's name, or if they do, spell it incorrectly. One of them grants him a few lines, saying:—"It is a pity that Mozart aspires to so much, and thereby injures both feeling and sentiment; his new quartetts, which he has dedicated to Haydn, are too highly elaborated. What tastes can approve of the longest?" Another, after his death, scoffs at his reputation. Two more, praise his *Don Juan*, but at a later period ascribe its success to the poem. One of the journals maintained that the *Zauberflöte* did not please; and nevertheless its reputation extended throughout every theatre, both large and small. It may thus be seen that Mozart does not owe much to the assistance lent him by the critics of his own time. Our contemporary, *The Musical Transcript*, gives the authorities whence the above singular specimens of critical perspicacity are gathered.

DUBLIN UNIVERSITY CHORAL SOCIETY.—The next concert of this society takes place on Friday, the 13th of January. Music: a selection from Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, and a miscellaneous selection, including a new part-song by Dr. Stewart, conductor to the society.

BURY CHORAL SOCIETY.—At the first annual meeting, a splendidly bound copy of Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* was presented, in the name of the society, to Mr. Richard Hacking, Jun., the conductor; and a copy of the composer's other great oratorio, to Mr. Spark, the secretary.